Advancing Community Empowerment:
Q&A Session from Strengthening Media Coverage RFA Bidders’ Conference on 17 November 2020

A total of 10 organizations were represented at the Bidders Conference and 8 organizations raised questions in the Q&A session. Additionally, two other organizations sent questions via email.

1) Can ACE confirm that the project’s sectors include health; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; livelihoods; disaster risk management and governance? Is it possible for proposals to include other sectors outside of ACE’s areas?

Correct, those are the sectors covered by ACE in southeastern Myanmar. It is possible to report on other broader issues, however Pact will prioritize proposals which focus on ACE’s key areas outlined above. Issues relating to and impacting those sectors could be relevant, for example land policy and registration or displacement and migration in southeastern Myanmar.

2) ACE西安酒香 Employee Benefits (health, WASH, education, livelihoods, disaster risk management and governance) as well as ACE’s areas of focus may be relevant. Is it possible to report on ACE’s areas in the Q&A session?

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2) Do applicants need to cover all of the sectors that ACE works on (health, WASH, education, livelihoods, disaster risk management, governance)? Or, could an applicant pick a few sectors where they are capable and have more knowledge?

As noted in the RFA, ACE welcomes proposals that focus on ACE's key sectoral areas on health, WASH, education, livelihoods, disaster management, and governance issues in southeastern Myanmar. But applicants do not necessarily need to cover every sector that ACE works in, and applicants can focus on sectors based on their competence and experience.

3) As we are a media group, our main activities are going to the field, reporting and holding debates. As we do not do trainings or workshops, our activity costs might be low. Some donors require a specific ratio between personnel and other costs. What does Pact require?

Pact does not have a specific cost ratio requirement and applicants should represent their projected costs as accurately as possible in the budget. The cost application will be evaluated for reasonableness, allocability, allowability, cost effectiveness, realism, and financial feasibility.

4) We are a grassroots organization working on mediation and negotiation issues. Most of the cases that we manage are gender-based violence, domestic abuse against women and land disputes. This is the first time we are exploring the possibility of applying for funding related to media. Since we are working on mediation issues, will it be feasible for us to apply?

The RFA for strengthening media coverage states the preference for local Myanmar-based organizations or media organizations based along the Thai-Myanmar border which focus on activities that strengthen media coverage of ACE sectors.
5) Our organization works with women and children and on domestic violence issues in Myawaddy. We are interested in exploring the possibility of applying in order to report on health and education issues. What is the best way to contact ACE with follow up questions?

The best way to contact ACE is via email, so please submit any questions to myanmargrants@pactworld.org. The deadline for questions is November 21, 2020. The closing date for submitting proposals is December 8, 2020.

6) We are an organization based in Mae Sot, Thailand. Is it possible for us to collaborate with another organization based in Myanmar? Can we submit a joint proposal?

ACE does not recommend the submission of joint proposals; funding will be provided directly to selected individual applicant organizations. Applicants may propose to hire another organization to conduct a service on a contract basis if relevant.
7) There are risks of reporting on sensitive issues in Myanmar, for example conflict or land grabbing. Will there be any protections for participants to whom reporters might need to ask sensitive questions? Would ACE support any mechanisms for proper fact checking?

There are lots of sensitivities related to journalism in southeastern Myanmar. For that reason, ACE is seeking capable media partners that employ experienced journalists who are cognizant of the potential risks involved. We do not necessarily want to encourage organizations who are not familiar with the risks of reporting articles on issues, even if they seem straightforward. Even these sectors can be quite political and sensitive especially in the southeast, so a lot of that responsibility would fall on the shoulders of the grantee. ACE seeks to work with partners that are capable, adhere to ethical standards of reporting, and are able to provide balanced and fair reporting on issues.

Please note that ACE does not plan to provide significant media technical assistance from Pact as this RFA is not specifically focused on capacity building project for media.

8) We are a media organization with an office in Mon. Is it possible for our Mon office to collaborate with another media group that we have worked with before? The proposal would come from our organization, such as budgeting, reporting, and monitoring, however collecting the information would be done by our media partner. Is it possible for us to apply if we were to work in the field like this?

This RFA is open to any non-governmental organization or media company that is not established in the United States, with preference for local Myanmar-based organizations or media organizations based along the Thai-Myanmar border covering southeastern Myanmar. Joint proposals are not encouraged under this RFA.
9) We are a technology company that is interested in conducting fact checking for public information. Is it possible for us to apply for this RFA and focus on reducing misinformation through fact checking? If we focus on ethnic languages, is there a possibility that it might strengthen our application?

ACE is seeking to fund activities that strengthen media coverage of issues affecting vulnerable communities in southeastern Myanmar with a focus on reporting on health, education, livelihoods, disaster management, and governance issues. ACE has a preference for proposals that relate to the key sectors mentioned in the RFA. Pact would expect applicants to be able to conduct fact checking to ensure news stories produced are accurate, balanced, and follow ethical standards in journalism.
10) Our organization is based in Bago Region, and we are working on media monitoring activities for hate speech, disinformation and misinformation – especially on Facebook. We work with media groups to share our findings from the media monitoring, for example launching a seminar for local people to disseminate accurate information. We are planning to educate local people on media literacy, and also shoot short videos from local people to raise their voices. Are these eligible activities? Also, the RFA mentions east Bago, but could we apply to work across all of Bago? ACE would encourage your organization to clearly link your proposed ideas to the priorities listed in the RFA. Successful applications will include activities that will strengthen media coverage relating to ACE key sector focus or other broader issues in southeastern Myanmar. For ACE, the geographic focus is on Kayah, Kayin, Mon and southern Shan states, as well as northern Tanintharyi and eastern Bago regions.

11) Our organization does not have much experience in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). When we apply for the grant, will there be guidance on MEL and indicators during the negotiation process? Applicants should do their best to develop a MEL plan for the proposed project. For organizations that identify as weaker in MEL, they could include the costs of the MEL staff or a service to provide technical support. Applicants that are shortlisted for this RFA will be supported by Pact during the proposal negotiation process to develop a clear MEL framework.
12) The RFA states that organizations defined as 'non-profit' may apply. Our organization has a hybrid structure; it is registered as a media production company in Myanmar, which raises funds among institutional donors and generates some commercial income with advertisements to cover the operational costs, but it is also registered as non-profit foundation in Thailand, raising funds to cover journalistic activities as well. Should we apply via our multimedia group in (Myanmar) or as an association in (Thailand)?

This competition is open to any non-governmental organization or media company that is not established in the United States, with preference for local Myanmar-based organizations or media organizations based along the Thai-Myanmar border. Under USAID assistance awards, applicants are not allowed to charge a profit. Non-profit entities may apply and for-profit entities may apply if they are willing to forego a profit on activities funded through ACE.

13) Our media agency is based in Mawlamyine, Mon State. Will there be another virtual Bidders Conference on the Strengthening Media Coverage RFA? As we missed the conference, could you tell us the best way to contact the ACE team?

As stated in the RFA, there is only one bidder’s conference scheduled. The best way to contact ACE is via email, so please submit any questions to myanmargrants@pactworld.org. The deadline for questions is November 21, 2020. The closing date for submitting proposals is December 8, 2020.